

PRICING PROGRAM
POLICY STATEMENT FOR FREE AND REDUCED PRICE MEALS

Year: 20__-20__

The _____
(Name of School Food Authority)
has agreed to participate in the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program and to receive commodities donated by USDA and accepts responsibility for providing free and reduced price meals to eligible children in the schools under its jurisdiction.

The School Food Authority assures the State Department of Education, Office of School Food Services, that the school system will uniformly implement the following policy to determine children's eligibility for free and reduced price meals in all National School Lunch Programs, School Breakfast Programs, and commodity-only schools under its jurisdiction. In fulfilling its responsibilities the School Food Authority agrees to:

- A. Serve meals free to children from households whose income is at or below that listed in Attachment A, column 1, to households providing a food stamp case number or a TANF case number and to those students pre-approved by direct certification. (TANF refers to the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Program as administered by the S. C. Department of Social Services.)
- B. Serve meals at a maximum reduced price of 40¢ for lunch and 30¢ for breakfast to children from households whose income is within that listed in Attachment A, column 2.

Income

"Income" means current income before deductions for income taxes, employees' social security taxes, insurance premiums, bonds, etc. It includes the following:

- 1. Monetary compensation for services, including wages, salary, commission or fees
 - 2. Net income from non-farm self-employment
 - 3. Net income from farm self-employment
 - 4. Social Security
 - 5. Dividends or interest on savings or bonds, income from estates or trusts, or net rental income
 - 6. Public assistance or welfare payments and Supplemental Security Income
 - 7. Unemployment and workman's compensations
 - 8. Government civilian employee or military retirement or pensions or veteran's payments
 - 9. Private pensions or annuities
 - 10. Alimony or child support payments
 - 11. Regular contributions from persons not living in the household
 - 12. Net royalties
 - 13. Other cash income (i.e., cash amounts received or withdrawn from savings, investments, trust accounts or other resources)
- C. Provide appropriate benefits to foster children in certain cases and to children from households who are experiencing unemployment which causes the household income to fall within the criteria set forth in Attachment A.

- D. Ensure that there will be no physical segregation of, nor any other discrimination against, any child because of his or her inability to pay the full price of the meal. The names of the children eligible to receive free or reduced price meals shall not be published, posted, or announced in any manner and there shall be no overt identification of any such children by use of special tokens or tickets or any other means. Further assurance is given that children eligible for free or reduced price meals shall not be required to:
1. Work for their meals
 2. Use a separate lunchroom
 3. Go through a separate serving line
 4. Enter the lunchroom through a separate entrance
 5. Eat meals at a different time
 6. Eat a meal different from that sold to children paying the full price
- E. Ensure that in the operation of child feeding programs, no child shall be discriminated against because of race, sex, color, national origin, age or disability.
- F. Verify in accordance with program regulations and maintain records as follows: (1) a summary of verification efforts; (2) the total number of applications on file as of October 31; and (3) the percentage or number of applications verified. Compliance with these requirements will be monitored by the State agency.
- G. Establish and use a fair hearing procedure for parents' appeals of the schools' decisions on applications and for school officials' challenges to the correctness of information contained in an application or to the continued eligibility of any child for free or reduced price meals. During the appeal and hearing, the child will continue to receive free or reduced price meals. A record of all such appeals and challenges and their disposition shall be retained for three (3) years.

Prior to initiating the hearing procedure, the parent or school principal may request a conference to provide an opportunity for the parent and school principal or designated representative to discuss the situation, present information, and obtain an explanation of data submitted in the application and decisions rendered. Such a conference shall not in any way prejudice or diminish the right to a fair hearing.

The hearing procedure shall provide the following:

1. A public-announced, simple method of making an oral or written request for a hearing.
2. An opportunity to be assisted or represented by an attorney or other person.
3. An opportunity to examine, prior to and during the hearing, the documents and records presented to support the decision under appeal.
4. Reasonable promptness and convenience in scheduling a hearing and adequate notice as to the time and place.
5. An opportunity to present oral or documentary evidence and arguments supporting their position.
6. An opportunity to question or refute any testimony or other evidence and to confront and cross-examine adverse witnesses.
7. That the hearing be conducted and the decision made by a hearing official who did not participate in the decision under appeal or in any previous conference.
8. That the decision of the hearing official be based on the oral and documentary evidence presented at the hearing and made a part of the hearing record.
9. That the parties concerned and any designated representatives thereof be notified in writing of the decision and a copy of the notification to the parties concerned of the hearing official's decision.
10. That for each hearing a written record be prepared, including the decision under appeal, any documentary evidence and a summary of any oral testimony presented at the hearing, the decision of the hearing official with the reason for the decision and a copy of the notification to the parties concerned of the hearing official's decision.

11. That such written record be preserved for a period of three (3) years and shall be available for examination by the parties concerned or their representatives at any reasonable time and place during such period.
- H. Designate the school principal or other school official to review applications and make determinations of eligibility. The reviewing official will use the criteria outlined in this policy to determine which individual children are eligible for free or reduced price meals.
- I. Develop and send to each child's parent or guardian a letter as outlined in Attachment B which includes an income scale and an application form with instructions for free and reduced price meals (Attachment C), at the beginning of each school year and whenever there is a change in eligibility criteria or whenever local employment conditions change due to major strikes or layoffs.

Parents will be requested to complete the application and return it to the school principal or school official responsible for application approval for review. **SUCH APPLICATIONS AND DOCUMENTATION OF ACTION TAKEN WILL BE MAINTAINED FOR THREE (3) YEARS AFTER THE END OF THE SCHOOL YEAR TO WHICH THEY PERTAIN.**

Applications may be filed at any time during the year. Any parent enrolling a child in school for the first time, at any time during the year, shall be supplied with an application. If a child transfers from one school or site to another under the jurisdiction of the same School Food Authority, his/her eligibility for a free or reduced price meal will be transferred to and honored by the receiving school.

Because unemployment is normally temporary in nature, approval should be made for a limited period of time and updated at a minimum of three specified times during the school year. It is the school's responsibility to establish temporary approval on an individual case basis and to notify the household of the conditions of a temporary approval. Those households seeking continued assistance may reapply by submitting a new application and reaffirming unemployment or current income status by November 15, January 15, and March 15.

All children from a household will receive the same benefits unless the household includes non-TANF and TANF children living together. Within ten working days of the receipt of applications, parents or guardians will be notified individually of the acceptance or denial of their applications. Children will be served meals immediately upon the establishment of their eligibility.

When an application is rejected, parents or guardians will be informed in writing of the reason for denial and of the hearing procedure. **A copy of all denial notifications will be retained on file.** The reasons for ineligibility shall be properly documented and retained on file at the School Food Authority level. The designated hearing official is the District Superintendent or an appointed designee. (The hearing official must be someone not involved in the original eligibility determination.)

- J. Submit a public release to the news media, local unemployment offices, and major employers contemplating large layoffs. The public release will contain the same information outlined in the parent letter and the income guidelines for free and reduced price meals (Attachment A) at the beginning of the school year.
- K. Establish a procedure to collect money from children who pay for their meals. The procedures described in Attachment F will be used so that no other children in the school will consciously be made aware by such procedure of the identity of the children receiving free or reduced price meals.
- L. Establish a system for obtaining on a daily basis an accurate count of meals served by category--free, reduced, and paid. The system(s) described in Attachment F will be used to determine the accurate count and to ensure that no other children in the school will consciously be made aware of the identity of those children receiving free or reduced price meals.

- M. Submit to the State Department of Education, Office of School Food Services and Nutrition, any alterations or amendments, public announcements, etc., prior to implementation. Such changes will be effective only upon approval. All changes in eligibility criteria must be publicly announced in the same manner used at the beginning of the school year.

Policy Statement Attachments

The following attachments are adopted and considered part of this policy:

- Attachment A: Income Eligibility Guidelines
- Attachment B: Letter to Households
- Attachment C: Application Forms and Instructions
- Attachment D: Notification of Eligibility Letter
- Attachment E: Public/Media Release
- Attachment F: Meal Count/Collection Procedures
- Attachment G: Notification of Selection for Verification of Eligibility
- Attachment H: Letter of Verification Results
- Attachment I: Verification Tracker/Roster for School Use
- Attachment J: Notice/Letter of Predetermined Eligibility

By affixing my signature below, I attest to the fact that I have read and agree to implement all assurances and agreements pertaining to the school year 20__-20__ Policy Statement for Free and Reduced Price Meals.

APPROVED BY:

S. C. Department of Education

Office of School Food Services and Nutrition:

District/School Use:

Director, State Office of School Food Services and Nutrition

School Food Authority Representative/Superintendent

Date

Date